



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

July 1, 2005

News Release

ICE HOUSTON ARRESTS MS-13 GANG MEMBER, ROBBERY SUSPECT

An admitted MS-13 gang member and illegal alien is wanted in California

HOUSTON — As part of its nationwide Operation Community Shield, special agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) yesterday arrested a member of the violent street gang MS-13, following his release by Harris County Sheriff's deputies after serving a 60-day sentence for drug possession.

Manuel Antonio Molina-Canales, 24, a citizen of Honduras, was taken into ICE custody on immigration charges. During an interview and background check, he admitted illegally entering the U.S. near Laredo, Texas, in 2000. ICE agents also discovered Molina-Canales was also wanted in California for robbery charges. He also told ICE agents he was a member of the violent gang known as the Mara Salvatrucha 13, or MS-13.

"We are vigorously identifying, arresting and deporting criminal aliens that are a danger to our community and to our nation's security," said Robert Rutt, ICE Houston special agent-in-charge. "We are expanding our efforts to identify gang members who pose a serious threat to our safety and who violated immigration laws in our country."

Molina-Canales was arrested as part of Operation Community Shield, an ICE initiative launched in March to target and dismantle violent street gangs across the country, such as MS-13. ICE's combined authorities for enforcing immigration and customs laws are powerful tools in fighting the growth of these criminal organizations.

ICE has gathered thousands of names of known and suspected gang members from state and local law enforcement, and is comparing those names against immigration databases to determine immigration status and deportability. ICE can also investigate the money laundering, narcotics smuggling, financial crimes and other cross-border crimes typically committed by street gangs.

Since Operation Community Shield began in March, hundreds of different gang members have been arrested nationwide, including more than 400 members of the MS-13 violent street gang. Operation Community Shield is designed to disrupt, dismantle and prosecute violent gang organizations by employing the full range of enforcement authorities and investigative tools available to ICE.

Molina-Canales has been turned over to the Harris County Sheriff's Department to be extradited to California. If convicted of the robbery charges, he will be deported back to Honduras following serving any sentence that he's awarded.

Re-entering the U.S. after being deported is a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.